



2012 Grazing Advisory Number 2: May 4, 2012

Tentative Opening Dates for Grazing in Wilderness Meadows

Background

Each year, Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks establish opening dates for grazing in their wilderness meadows. This allows the parks to protect biological and scenic resources from the impacts that can occur when pack stock graze meadows before soil has dried and plants have developed.

Meadows are most susceptible to pack stock impacts when ground moisture levels are high. Thus, the parks use the amount of winter precipitation (measured in the form of high country snowpack) as a guide when establishing opening dates. To determine snowpack, the parks collect data along a series of snow courses throughout the winter. The late April snowpack measurements give the last estimate of conditions.

We use the amount of moisture in the snowpack to categorize the year as one of the following:

- 1) **Dry** (less than 50% of average snowpack)
- 2) **Normal** (51% to 150% of average snowpack)
- 3) **Wet** (more than 150% of average snowpack)

The parks issues two bulletins during the spring season in order to allow commercial outfitters, recreational users, and park operations to plan trips in advance. The bulletins update current conditions and anticipated opening dates. **All bulletins are advisory only. The actual opening dates of specific meadows will be determined in the field. For final opening dates, call the Wilderness Office prior to your trip at 559-565-3766.**

Current Situation

As of **May 4, 2012**, measurements show that snowpack within the parks is approximately 24% of average in the Kings and San Joaquin River Drainages, 27% in the Kaweah River Drainage, and 6% in the Kern River Drainage. Up-to-date snowpack data is available on the internet at <http://cdec.water.ca.gov/snow/>.

At this time, the parks are categorizing 2012 as a **dry** year. This means that meadows will open to grazing relatively early. However, please be advised that low levels of available forage may cause meadows to close early as well.

Tentative Opening Dates

The attached list shows **dry** year opening dates for areas of the parks. The list is arranged by drainage and travel zone. These dates are only guidelines. Depending on actual conditions, changes in opening dates may be made as the season progresses.

If you are planning a trip on or near the opening date of a particular area, it is your responsibility to contact the parks' Wilderness Office at **559-565-3766** for the latest condition update. For more information, also visit www.nps.gov/seki/planyourvisit/wilderness.htm.

Note that the opening dates only restrict grazing. We permit pack trips prior to opening dates as long as **all feed is packed in** and stock remain tied to either an existing hitch rail or a "high line" between two trees or rocks on a flat, hard, non-vegetated site away from the trail, water, and camp.

We appreciate your cooperation in managing stock use in Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks. Together we can continue to protect the natural diversity and beauty of the Sierra wilderness.

DRY SNOWPACK YEAR OPENING DATES

Updated May 4, 2012

South Fork San Joaquin River Drainage

Opening Date	Zone or Number	Meadow Areas
7/1	28	South Fork San Joaquin River; Goddard Canyon
6/15	33-1	Evolution Meadow
7/7	33	McClure Meadow; Darwin Meadows; Colby CLOSED TO GRAZING in 2012
7/15	33-8	Lower McGee Canyon
7/15	34	Evolution Basin

Kings River Drainage

Opening Date	Zone or Number	Meadow Areas
7/1	38	Blue Canyon
7/1	39	LeConte Canyon & Palisade Creek (below lakes)
7/1	42-1	Dusy Creek
7/1	45	Palisade Lakes
7/1	46	Upper South Fork Kings River (JMT crossing & below)
7/15	46	Upper South Fork Kings River (above JMT crossing)
7/15	47	Cartridge & Cataract Creeks
7/1	51	Middle Fork Kings River (Simpson Meadow & below); Hay & Gnat Meadows
7/1	52	Kennedy Canyon & Lewis Creek
7/15	53	Dougherty & Horseshoe Creeks; State Lks
8/1	53-7	Shorty's Meadow
6/20	54	Granite & Copper Creeks
7/1	56	Twin Lakes & Pinchot Pass Area
7/15	57	Woods Lake Basin
7/1	58-1	Castle Domes Meadow
7/7	58	Woods Creek Crossing & Baxter Creek Drift Fence Meadow
	61	Sixty Lakes Basin CLOSED TO GRAZING in 2012
7/1	63	Charlotte Creek
7/1	65	Upper Bubbs Creek (above Junction Meadow)
6/15	66	Lower Bubbs Creek (Junction Meadow and below)
7/1	67	East Lake
6/15	68	Sphinx Creek
6/10	69	Roaring River Ranger Station Area
6/10	70	Cloud Canyon (Brewer Creek and above)
6/15	71	Deadman Canyon (Austin Camp and above)
6/15	72	Sugarloaf Creek
6/15	72	Ferguson & Crowley Canyons
6/15	73	Ball Dome Area

Kern River Drainage

Opening Date	Zone or Number	Meadow Areas
7/1	79	Cold Springs, Milestone, Kern-Kaweah River
6/20	80	Upper Kern Basin & Tyndall Creek
6/20	81	Wright and Wallace Creeks
7/1	81-2.3	Wallace Creek Waterfall
6/25	82	Upper Kern Canyon (above Hot Springs to Junction Meadow)
6/20	83	Whitney & Crabtree Creeks
7/5	83-4	Upper Crabtree Meadow
6/20	84	Lower Rock Creek (below Nathan's Meadow) & Siberian Pass Creek
7/1	85	Upper Rock Creek (Nathan's Meadow & above)
6/1	86	Lower Kern Canyon (Hot Springs to Kern Ranger Station)
6/20	87	Big Arroyo & Chagoopa Plateau
7/1	88	Little Five Lakes
7/15	88	Big Five Lakes
6/15	89	Coyote, Soda, & Lost Creeks
6/15	89	Lower Rattlesnake Canyon (Cow Camp)
7/1	89	Upper Rattlesnake Canyon (above Cow Camp)

Kaweah River Drainage

Opening Date	Zone or Number	Meadow Areas
6/15	74	Clover & Silliman Creeks
7/1	75	Lone Pine Creek
6/15	77	Bearpaw Meadow to River Valley
6/1	77-5	Redwood Meadow
6/15	77	Cliff Creek & Pinto Lake
6/10	90	Hockett Plateau
3/1	91	South Fork Kaweah River
7/1	92	Monarch & Franklin Creeks
7/1	93	White Chief, Eagle & Mosquito Creeks
7/1	94	Mineral Creek
3/1	96	North Fork Kaweah River

These tables only list tentative opening dates. Always check for area-specific regulations related to stock use. Find details about these regulations by calling the Wilderness Office at 559-565-3766, requesting a copy of the annual Stock User's Guide, or visiting the website at www.nps.gov/seki/planyourvisit/wilderness.htm.